



ASPIRA of New York, Inc.

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Daniel Agosto
Chairman
Esther Ruiz
Vice Chairwoman

Dear reader:

Aspira's philosophy is fundamentally rooted in a strong sense of community, and the future of any community begins with its youth. We believe that communicating and directly interacting with our youth -- sharing our experiences and hopes, and encouraging them to do this with one another -- is the key to reaching them. A relationship is forged with each young person Aspira reaches, and grows stronger throughout the youth's association with the agency.

Founded in 1961 by Dr. Antonia Pantoja, Aspira of New York is the oldest and largest Latino youth development and educational advocacy organization in New York City. Aspira serves over 2,000 Puerto Rican/Latino youth annually through various leadership development and educational programs. *The mission of Aspira of New York is to foster the social advancement of the Puerto Rican/Latino community by supporting its youth in the pursuit of educational excellence through leadership development services that emphasize a commitment to community service and a pride in the Puerto Rican/Latino heritage.*

In its thirty-two years of service to the Puerto Rican/Latino community, Aspira of New York has touched the lives of over 70,000 Puerto Rican/Latino "Aspirantes." Aspira has challenged the typically low level of expectations that society has set for Latinos and other minority youth by inspiring them to succeed and by providing them with the support they need.

I hope the enclosed materials in this packet provide you with helpful information on the agency, its services, and its unwavering commitment to the young people of this city.

Sincerely,

Anthony Lopez
Executive Director

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
Celebrating More Than Three Decades of Investing in Puerto Rican and Latino Youth

Associated with Aspira of Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and National Office



ASPIRA OF NEW YORK

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Youth Leadership Development Program (LDP)

The Leadership Development Program (LDP) is the core program of ASPIRA. Through school-based leadership clubs, students learn the "ASPIRA Process" of awareness, analysis, and action. The Program provides leadership training, cultural enrichment activities, and community action projects that teach students how to develop their abilities to become effective leaders of their community. Each club is represented at the ASPIRA Clubs Federation (ACF), an assembly that convenes twice every month to discuss action-oriented activities for all clubs in New York. LDP also provides HIV/AIDS information and workshops to youth. It further provides HIV/AIDS peer education training, which enables Aspirantes (ASPIRA's youth) to provide bilingual HIV/AIDS workshops at local high schools. Additionally, LDP coordinates the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program, which works with Latino high school students to help them learn about and become involved in the process of public policy formulation. LDP is funded by the Aspira National Association, The Department of Youth Services, The Community Development Agency, and private foundations.



Project AWARE

The Aspire to Win through Academic Retention and Excellence (AWARE) Project is an intensive leadership skills, dropout prevention/attendance improvement program serving junior and high school students. It offers attendance and academic monitoring, basic skills improvement, family assistance, parent workshops, and leadership development club services. This program is funded by the United Way of New York City/CAPS Program.



Project BEAM and BEAM TEN

Operating out of IS 139 in the South Bronx (BEAM) and P.S. 86 in the Kingsbridge/Norwood section of the north Bronx, The goal of the *Building Educational Aspiration and Multiculturalism* Project is to open schools for area residents to offer services integrate families and communities. It provides leadership development, tutorial assistance, family and academic counseling, parent involvement training, recreational activities, cultural programs, family-support services, child care, and drug and violence prevention activities. These services are provided after school, evenings, and weekends, all year round. ASPIRA's Beacon schools are funded by the NYC Department of Youth Services.



College/Career Advisement Program (C/CAP)

C/CAP provides students with academic and financial aid counseling, college placement activities, SAT preparation courses, campus tours, and participation in college admission interviews arranged by the program. In addition, C/CAP houses three career groups: Law, Communications, and Health, which encourage participation in these professional fields through workshops, career-site visits, and internships. C/CAP is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Aspira National Association.



Amoco Scholarship Program

The Amoco Dealers Community Scholarship program is a highly successful effort by Amoco dealers, brokers, and the Amoco Foundation to provide financial help to college-bound students in the greater New York City metropolitan area. Administered through ASPIRA of New York's C/CAP division, the program awards and recognizes those high school graduates who have served their school and community but have limited financial resources for college. Eligible applicants must be residents of the greater New York City Metropolitan Area and Southern Connecticut. Funding for the Amoco Scholarship Program is provided by Amoco dealers and the Amoco Foundation.



AmeriCorps/Project Safe and Sound

Funded under President Bill Clinton's AmeriCorps Initiative, Project Safe and Sound is a unique collaboration of public agencies and community-based organizations united to mobilize individuals, families, and businesses to become agents of long lasting change for a violence-free environment in the South Bronx. After year one, the program will expand to other high need areas in New York City. Members are recruited citywide to work towards creating a safer New York through neighborhood education campaigns and community service projects. The AmeriCorps program is funded by the Corporation for National Service and the New York State Office for Voluntary Service.

ASPIRA of NEW YORK, INC.
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

WHO WE ARE

ASPIRA of New York, Inc. (ASPIRA), is the most experienced and largest non-profit Puerto Rican/Latino youth leadership development and educational advocacy organization in New York City. Our mission is to foster the social advancement of the Puerto Rican/Latino community by supporting its youth in the pursuit of educational excellence and through leadership development programs that emphasize commitment to the community and pride in the Puerto Rican/Latino heritage.

WHAT WE DO

ASPIRA develop the leadership capacity of its youth by engaging them in weekly Leadership Clubs whose meetings are guided by a curriculum designed to develop their Cultural and Self Awareness, Critical Thinking and Social Action skills. This is known as the ASPIRA Process of Leadership Development. ASPIRA provides youth with a variety of leadership development opportunities by hiring young professionals who can relate to the needs of our youth and provide educational services in a culturally competent and youth-focused manner.

OUR VISION

ASPIRA's vision is to be the premier Puerto Rican/Latino youth leadership development agency in New York State. ASPIRA envisions establishing a major presence in chosen communities statewide by the year 2000, and in so doing, become the first choice of funding sources for youth programs in the State of New York. This vision can only be made possible by our dedication to the population we serve and our commitment to excellence. ASPIRA commits to delivering quality services for our youth in leadership development, educational advocacy, public policy and career counseling. We will strive each day to make this vision a reality.

ASPIRA of New York, Inc.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The year 1996 will mark the 35th anniversary of the ASPIRA movement. Since its formation in 1961, ASPIRA has grown from a small non-profit counseling agency in New York City to a national association with offices in five states, Puerto and the District of Columbia.

ASPIRA has had a historical impact on education reform in New York City. In 1974, ASPIRA initiated a law suit against the New York City Board of Education, that resulted in the landmark Consent Decree. This decision affirmed the right for Spanish-speaking and other foreign students to have bilingual education until they reached a level of proficiency in the English language that would facilitate equal access to education.

ASPIRA has been an effective voice on behalf of the educational needs of Latino children, working with the Board of Education and the Latino Roundtable on Educational Reform wherever possible to foster the optimal conditions for educational success for all children. Ninety percent of our high school senior graduate from high school and go on to college.

ASPIRA has played a crucial role in helping to bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between Puerto Rican/Latino parents and the New York City public and private schools. Based on bonds of trust and understanding between students, their parents, and staff, ASPIRA has encouraged greater parental involvement in their children's education and assisted in fostering better understanding between teachers, administrators and parents.

The overall effectiveness of ASPIRA can be gauged by the progress of over 50,000 alumni who can be found in significant leadership positions in public life as well as in the private sector. Their successes testify to their own efforts who can and will succeed if provided support and guidance, and if the expectation of success is clearly and unequivocally communicated.



Aspira of New York, Inc.

MISSION:

The overall purpose of Aspira is to foster the social advancement of the Puerto Rican/Latino community by supporting its youth in the pursuit of educational excellence and through leadership development programs that emphasize commitment to the community and pride in the Puerto Rican/Latino heritage.



ASPIRA Process

AWARENESS:

The process of becoming aware of one's cultural, racial and ethnic background and history. Discovery of self-value and value of others.

ANALYSIS:

The process of engaging in critical thinking, including scrutiny and inquiry to expand ones knowledge and value of self and others, while appreciating skills necessary for everyday life.

ACTION:

The process of putting the knowledge on has acquired to use for the benefit of self and others, especially one's family and community





Leadership Philosophy

ASPIRA accepts and operates from the perspective that everyone possesses leadership potential, thus rejecting the *divine right* and *inherent birthright* theories of leadership. ASPIRA believes there must be multiple opportunities and mechanisms (1) for bringing out people's untapped talents, and (2) for allowing them to develop these talents to the fullest potential. In addition, they must be free to study leadership as a composite of values, styles, circumstances, characteristics, skills and behaviors as a means of replicating and approximating educational experiences.

ASPIRA believes that while certain personality characteristics may distinguish people as extraordinary in their abilities to influence others and shape events, everyone has a part in getting a community out of the serious conditions of economic and political dis-enfranchisement. From this viewpoint, ASPIRA designed its leadership curriculum to create opportunities for young people to exercise their leadership skills and contribute to the community.





Educational Philosophy

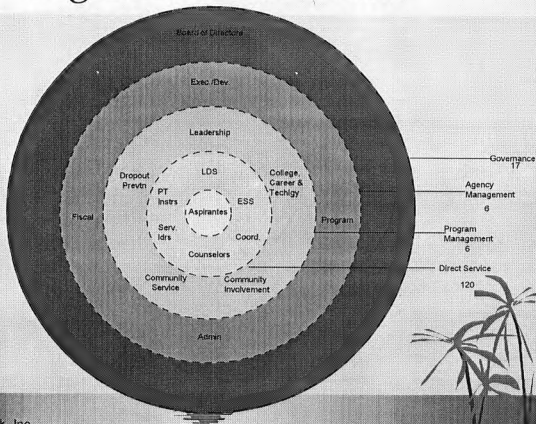
ASPIRA's educational philosophy includes:

- Validating the benefits of being a bilingual/multicultural adult and promoting acquisition of the values and skills necessary to communicate effectively across cultures
- Setting rigorous academic standards and high expectations for all students
- Involving students and their families in the school planning and decision-making. schools that furnish opportunities for them to make significant contributions to their community
- Providing learning experiences essential to success in the twenty-first century
- Emphasizing teaching and positive values that improve students' learning capacity
- Highlighting values of self reliance, team work, and service, development of fundamental disciplines such as reading, writing, and mathematics
- Stressing science and technological knowledge and process skills to close educational gaps youths have had due to the quality of their school experience





Organizational Chart





Shirley Rumiak at Harvard University.

Shirley looked at her jeans floating in soapsuds in the red plastic pail. For nearly two hours she had been trying to scrub them clean. Her back ached. As she rested, she thought of her grandmother from Puerto Rico with new respect. Her grandmother had washed clothes for ten children, her husband, and herself, all by hand, and in less than two hours!

Shirley Rumiak of New York City discovered life without laundromats in Bolivia last summer. She was one of 76 urban minority students who were able to go abroad with AFS in 1995 because of a \$250,000 grant from the DeWitt Wallace/Youth Travel and Enrichment Fund, administered by The New York Community Trust. And learning what it's like to wash clothes by hand was only the beginning.

Shirley also learned how to pick coffee beans. "When I came back, I started to tell my mother about this and how I had learned which coffee beans to pick (all except the yellow and green ones), and I noticed that she was laughing. When I asked her why, she replied that she had picked coffee beans as a small girl in Puerto Rico. Then we discussed the whole process of making the beans into ground coffee." As they talked, Shirley realized that many immigrants with children born in the United States were hesitant to talk about their customs and traditions for fear that their assimilated children might make fun of them.

She learned something else about her Latino heritage. "While in Bolivia I realized that although the people there don't have much, they give everything they do have—their

Creating Connections

BY NANCY STRIVE

hearts and their love—while in the United States, with all our gadgets and advanced technology, we are infamous for closing our doors to strangers. And though at times people tend to look down on third-world countries simply because they are underdeveloped, we have a lot to learn from them."

Shirley concludes, "Getting out there and seeing the world is really what it's all about. I learned so much from seeing, breathing, tasting, feeling a culture similar to that of my own ancestors. I learned to appreciate things that I had taken for granted before, like hot water and bathrooms. I want to see all of the world, from the big countries to the most remote. My hunger for knowledge has expanded from the textbook to the actual experience of living it. I've only begun."

Shirley's "textbook" experiences will continue too, at least for the immediate future. She is currently a first-year student at Harvard, where she plans to study Latin American politics.

For Tomorrow's Leaders

Designed especially for minority youth, students from economically disadvantaged urban and rural communities, and physically challenged young people, the AFS/DeWitt Wallace Diversity Initiative challenges participants to reach beyond their immediate community and to develop leadership skills. All DeWitt Scholars raise part of their own participation fee. After their return they are also expected to remain involved with the program as mentors to other participants.

Many of the DeWitt participants came from urban areas where the traditional AFS chapter

"I learned so much from seeing, breathing, tasting, feeling a culture similar to that of my own ancestors."

structure does not exist. So, for selection and support of students, AFS turned to community-based organizations including the "I Have a Dream" Foundation in Los Angeles, and El Puente and Aspira in New York. It is clear that such partnerships can advance the goals of both organizations while offering students opportunities that are unique.

The Aspira Association, for example, is a national nonprofit organization devoted to education and leadership development of Latino youth. Associate director of Aspira of New York and director of the Educational Talent Search Program E. Lydell Carter recently discussed the benefits of the partnership with AFS. Aspira begins working with students in ninth grade to prepare them for college by encouraging them to explore beyond their own neighborhoods. Participation in AFS also improves their qualifications for college. "Part of our philosophy is the importance of positive risk-taking in the development of good leadership skills. We sometimes try to put the students in uncomfortable situations that will get them to use those skills deep down inside that would never otherwise be developed."

But even as the students face unfamiliar experiences through AFS, they know they are not alone. Both AFS and Aspira support them in completing the AFS application, allaying the family concerns, raising the part of the program costs not covered by the DeWitt Wallace

Scholarship, and learning about their host country.

"We look to strengthen the partnership, the collaboration that we already have with AFS and to expose more of our students to it," says Mr. Carter. "Now that we've had a student, Jasmine Ortiz, who actually went away, who got the scholarship and had a wonderful experience, she's been doing the telling and selling for us. I look to her for leadership in helping more *Aspirantes* through the application process so that more of them can participate this year."

AFS has received a \$275,000 grant from the DeWitt-Wallace Fund for the 1996-97 year. The goal is to build on past success, and with the help of partner organizations like Aspira, to provide life-changing experiences for 100 students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to live and study abroad.

Nancy Struve is the editor of AFS World.



(Above)
E. Lydell
Carter of
the Aspira
Association.

(Below)
Shirley in
Bolivia.

